

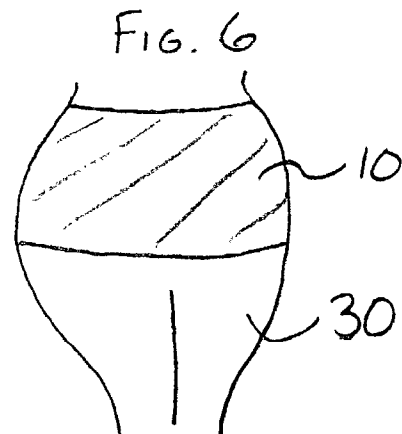
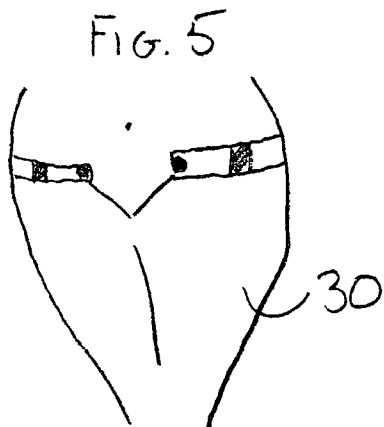
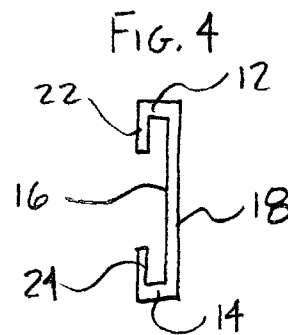
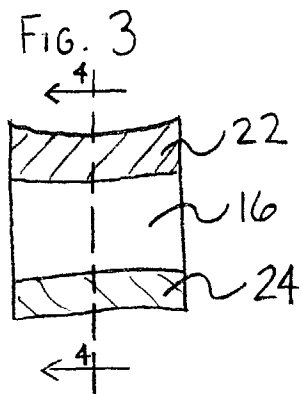
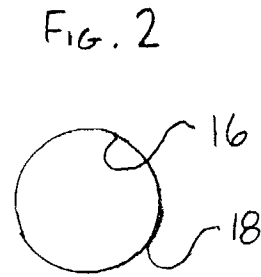
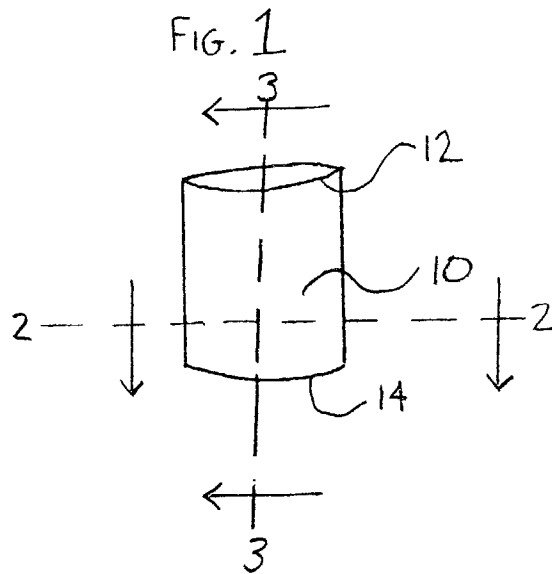
(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication** (10) **Pub. No.: US 2004/0049834 A1**
Stangle et al. (43) **Pub. Date: Mar. 18, 2004**(54) **SLEEVE FOR CLOTHING COVERAGE AND SUPPORT**(22) Filed: **Sep. 18, 2002****Publication Classification**(76) Inventors: **Gregory L. Stangle**, Chicago, IL (US);
Elizabeth S. Rodriguez, Oak Park, IL (US)(51) **Int. Cl.⁷** **A41F 15/00**; A41F 9/00;
A41F 3/02(52) **U.S. Cl.** **2/338**

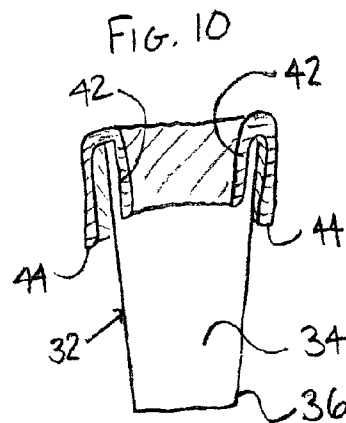
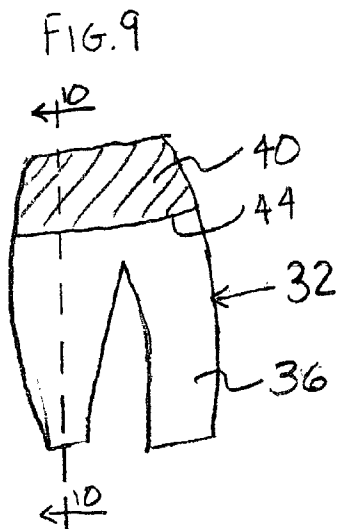
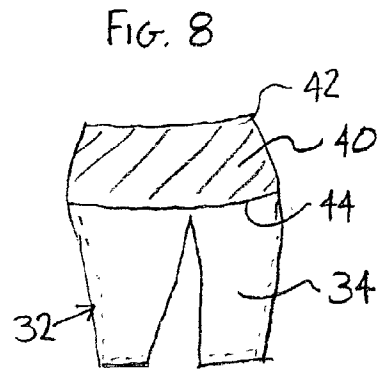
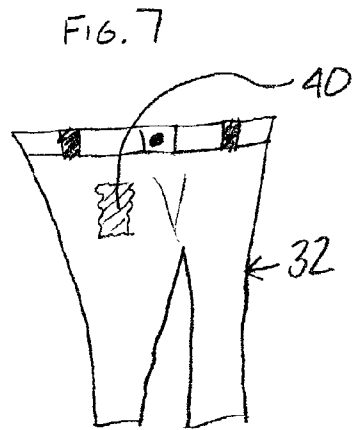
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CHICAGO, IL 60603 (US)(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention is a wearable device about an individual's waistline and over unfastened clothing, so that the device offers coverage over unfastened clothing and offers support to the clothing and to the individual's waistline.

(21) Appl. No.: **10/246,189**





SLEEVE FOR CLOTHING COVERAGE AND SUPPORT

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a garment that is worn about the waist of the wearer to (1) enable the wearing of clothing that is otherwise too small to be zipped, buttoned, snapped or otherwise fastened, such as during pregnancy or with respect to an overweight wearer or a wearer whose body proportions have changed, and (2) provide support for the abdomen of the pregnant or overweight wearer or other wearer whose body proportions have changed.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Women undergo significant physical changes during pregnancy. As a woman's pregnancy progresses and her physical size increases, her regular wardrobe no longer fits properly. Typically, the woman's initial reaction to this dilemma is to try to figure out a way to prolong the use of her regular wardrobe and, thus, avoid having to purchase and wear unattractive maternity clothing.

[0003] In the early stages of pregnancy, as the woman's belly begins to expand, her regular pants, skirts and shorts (collectively, "Bottoms") become too tight in the waist to wear comfortably. In an effort to prolong the ability to wear the Bottoms, the woman begins to wear her Bottoms without fastening the top button, snap, hook or other fastener ("Fastener"), often using a rubber band or other device as a means of securing the Bottoms on the woman's body. Before long, as her pregnancy progresses and her belly further expands, the woman will be unable even to fasten the zipper on her Bottoms. The woman will then wear her Bottoms unzipped and secured with the rubber band or other temporary means with long tops that cover the unzipped zipper and unfastened Fastener so as not to expose her undergarments or uncovered body to the public.

[0004] At this stage of pregnancy, in order to accommodate and conform to her expanded figure, the woman will need new and larger clothing to wear throughout the rest of her pregnancy and for an extended period of time after giving birth until she regains her pre-pregnancy figure. Adding to the burden of acquiring new clothing is the fact that the woman will want her new clothing to be both comfortable and attractive. The woman may attempt to deal with these problems in a number of ways. One option is for the woman to purchase regular clothing in larger sizes to accommodate her expanded figure. However, the problem encountered by the woman that purchases oversized regular clothing is that, while the new clothing might accommodate the woman's expanding waistline, the remainder of the woman's body has not expanded proportionately. The result is clothing that may fit around the waistline, but is still too large for the rest of the woman's body, resulting in a poor, uncomfortable fit and unattractive appearance.

[0005] Another option for the pregnant woman is to purchase a new wardrobe consisting of various types of maternity clothing. However, because maternity clothing is expensive, the purchase of a new maternity wardrobe is not a viable option for many pregnant women. In addition to the cost issue, existing maternity clothing offerings are limited, consisting of oversized pants with unsightly elastic waistbands and oversized tops and dresses that are intended to be

worn out and over such pants. These maternity clothing options are unacceptable for most women that do not have unlimited resources to spend on clothing but want to maintain an attractive appearance and their own personal style throughout pregnancy. These maternity clothing options are also unacceptable for working women that must maintain a professional appearance in the work environment.

[0006] Pregnant women are not the only people that experience difficulty in wearing their regular clothing. Throughout the course of a lifetime, a person's body shape often changes due to any of a number of factors including diet, aging, illness, lack of exercise, and the like. The person may become overweight, or the proportions of the person's body may simply change over time. Unfortunately, the person's wardrobe does not conform to such bodily changes, and eventually the wardrobe no longer properly fits the person. Thus, the person is forced to cease wearing otherwise wearable clothing and purchase replacement clothing that properly fits the person's body.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

[0007] One object of the present invention is to provide a garment that enables the wearing of clothing that is otherwise too small to be zipped, buttoned snapped or otherwise fastened, such as during pregnancy or with respect to an overweight wearer or other wearer whose body proportions have changed.

[0008] Another object is to provide such a garment that provides support for the abdomen of the pregnant or overweight wearer or other wearer whose body proportions have changed.

[0009] Another object is to provide such a garment that provides coverage of the body when used with the wearer's existing unfastened clothing.

[0010] Another object is to provide such a garment that is comfortable and easy to wear during use over long periods of time without burdening the person wearing the apparatus or any particular portions of the body.

[0011] Another object is to provide such a garment that is adaptable to the enlargement and change in configuration of the abdomen of the pregnant woman during the entire period of gestation, instead of requiring the purchase of a larger garment each time the pregnant woman's size increases.

[0012] Another object is to provide such a garment that enables the pregnant or overweight wearer or other wearer whose body proportions have changed to continue wearing her existing wardrobe and avoid having to purchase expensive and unattractive maternity clothing or other oversized clothing.

[0013] Another object is to provide such a garment that can be worn without pilling, snagging or otherwise damaging the fabric of the wearer's clothing.

[0014] Another object is to provide such a garment that is inexpensive to manufacture and sell while having a long operational life.

[0015] Another object is to provide such a garment that can be manufactured as part of original garments, allowing pregnant women and others with rounded abdomens to purchase form-fitting clothing.

[0016] Further objects and advantages are to provide improved elements and arrangements thereof in an apparatus for the purpose described which is dependable, economical, durable and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes.

[0017] These together with other objects of the invention, along with the various features of novelty which characterize the invention, are pointed out with particularity in the detailed description annexed to and forming a part of this disclosure. The foregoing and other objects and advantages are achieved in the present invention. For a better understanding of the invention, its operating advantages and the specific objects attained by its uses, reference should be had to the accompanying descriptive matter in which there is illustrated a preferred embodiment of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] FIG. 1 illustrates a view of the sleeve 10 of the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 2 illustrates the sleeve 10 having an inside surface 16 and outside surface 18.

[0020] FIG. 3 illustrates the first end 12 and second end 14 of the sleeve 10 featuring an area of elastic material that folds over attaching to the inside surface 16.

[0021] FIG. 4 illustrates the first end 12 folded over to create the waist fold 22, and the second end 14 folded over to create the hip fold 24.

[0022] FIG. 5 illustrates unfastened clothing 30.

[0023] FIG. 6 illustrates how the sleeve 10 of the invention can be worn over such unfastened clothing 30, thus keeping such unfastened clothing 30 on the body of the wearer and hiding both the unfastened clothing 30 and the wearer's exposed body.

[0024] FIG. 7 illustrates a movable sleeve 40 visible through a cut-way of the clothing 32.

[0025] FIG. 8 illustrates how, initially, the sleeve 40 could be built into clothing 32 without impacting normal use.

[0026] FIG. 9 illustrates the outside surface 36 of the clothing 32, where the movable sleeve 40 is folded over and around the clothing 32 to provide extra covering of the clothing 32 or support of the person's body.

[0027] FIG. 10 illustrates the movable sleeve 40, folded around the clothing 32.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0028] The present invention is a wearable device about an individual's waistline and over unfastened clothing, so that the device offers coverage over unfastened clothing and offers support to the clothing and to the individual's waistline. The preferred embodiment is shown in FIGS. 1-6.

[0029] FIG. 1 illustrates a view of the sleeve 10. As shown in FIG. 1, the sleeve 10 has a first end 12, second end 14, and as shown in FIG. 2, which is a cut-away along line 2-2 in FIG. 1, the sleeve 10 has an inside surface 16 and outside surface 18. Sleeve 10 is of a hollow, tubular, very roughly rectangular shape that is open at its first end 12 to define a waist opening, and is also open at its second end 14 to define a hip opening. The sleeve 10 is composed of elastic material

and has an elasticity and a width that adheres to a wearer's natural body shape without constraint.

[0030] As shown in FIG. 3, which is a cut-away along line 3-3 in FIG. 1, the first end 12 and second end 14 of the sleeve 10 feature an area of elastic material that folds over attaching to the inside surface 16. As depicted in FIG. 4, a cut-away along line 4-4 in FIG. 3, the first end 12 folds over to create the waist fold 22, and the second end 14 folds over to create the hip fold 24. The waist fold 22 and hip fold 24 create a two-ply elastic fold that provides additional strength to hold clothing in place on the wearer's body and direct additional support toward the midsection of the wearer.

[0031] The fabric of the sleeve 10 can be completely manufactured by machine (such as a Santoni knitting machine) without any manual stitching or sewing of multiple fabric pieces, resulting in the seamless tubular shape and overall attractive appearance of the preferred embodiment of the invention. However, any other suitable material that provides sufficient comfort, expandability, resiliency, uniform support and shape retention when stretched or expanded can be employed as the fabric of the invention, and such material may be manufactured via means other than by seamless knitting machine, resulting in an embodiment of the invention that is not seamless. The fabric composition must have the desired elastic characteristics so that the invention is effective for holding in place upon the body of the wearer clothing that is otherwise unable to be fastened or closed, and for shaping and firming the waistline and mid-section of the wearer. Furthermore, the waist fold 22 and hip fold 24 can be attached to the inside sleeve of the sleeve 10 by either stitching or by being integrally woven along with the remainder of the sleeve 10.

[0032] The foregoing characteristics permit the invention to be expanded about and cover the specific area of clothing that is otherwise unable to be fastened or closed and the corresponding specific body portion intended by the wearer, such as the belly area, providing uniform, gentle support and shape thereto. The invention can be constructed in any suitable size and configuration, however, the preferred embodiment has, in an unstretched condition and laying flat, a length of nine inches (9") to fifteen inches (15") and, in an unstretched condition and laying flat, a width of four inches (4") to ten inches (10"). Owing to the superior cost, ease of manufacture, wearing comfort, expandability, resiliency, support and attractiveness of the fabric composition of the preferred embodiment of the invention, the preferred embodiment is constructed in a "one size" manner. However, the invention can be manufactured in various shapes and sizes to accommodate different materials, different body portions and different size requirements and conditions of the persons intending to wear the invention. Alternatively, the sizing method can simply involve the use of predetermined small, medium, large, extra large sizes and/or other sizes, based upon predetermined criteria, and the shape of the invention can be varied from the tubular, very roughly rectangular shape of the preferred embodiment of the invention.

[0033] The sleeve 10 is made of fabric, preferably a soft, woven, elastic, and resilient fabric. The specific fabric that is employed can be selected based on a variety of factors, including, without limitation, cost, ease of manufacture, wearing comfort, expandability, resiliency, support and

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